

CHARLIE LOU PAYSEE

SUMMARY: Charlie Lou Paysee, office manager at the ILA, recalls her mother Emily Moses' career at the ILA; beginning her career working alongside her mother. She remembers attending Labor Day parties and growing up in an Union household. Paysee discusses a time when local unions were segregated and talks about how women are holding more posts in the Union now than before.

00:45

Charlie Lou, maiden name Moses. Mother Emily Moses. Paysee – French. Husband's family came to Louisiana. Born in Galveston. Worked in Galveston till Hurricane Ike. Live in Bellevista. ILA offices severely damaged during Ike. Born 1943, mother Emily Moses worked in ILA. Worked for Buddy Rasberry. Started working in Nov 1977, worked for Benny Holland, Clyde Fitzgerald. Mother was there for 44 years. Mother died Sept 15, 2000. Retd in 1991. She was bookkeeper, secretary, office manager. Grandfather was business agent for teamsters. Union knew each other. Mom got job there. Very low paying when started. 6 day work week. 15 min coffee breaks twice a day. Was only child. Did filing during summertime but didn't get paid. Mother went to secretarial school. Did not go to college. In early 50s, there was split in Union. ILA was part of American Federation of Labor. ILA was kicked out of AFL. Even got office stationery that said ILA independent. Then President of ILA, Yaeger went to the new longshoreman association, with all the contracts.

11:11

No one followed Yaeger. Stayed with secretary treasurer in old company. Some integration as far as executive office was concerned. Locals were still segregated. While growing up did not have a problem with integration. Not all longshoreman were black. Husband's grandfather worked on docks and was white. Father came from TN, Educated and also taught in Kentucky. Invented a machine but no patents. Dad worked in coal mines for sometime and decided not to continue with it. He joined Coastguards. Stationed in Galveston.

16:33

Father injured in war. Became city bus driver. Never worked on docks. Mother first woman secy of Galveston labor Council. President OPEIU, VP of Texas state AFL and honorary member of ILA. Very few honorary members of ILA. Commonly said that ILA stand for I love America. Buddy Rasberry's wife used to say it also stands for I live alone. Family and ILA were two most important things of her life.

19:50

Massey stopped taking salary. Mom was not paid much. Primary responsibility was to negotiate contracts. Master contract in place now from New York to Texas. Have to negotiate on a local level only. Earlier there was no master contract. Had to negotiate own contracts then. Hired some new people. Hired Lucille Allen, who was a Black lady. In the 60s Mom interviewed her. Eventually went to work for ILA.

25:30

Did filing in the earlier days. Decorated the office. Graduated, married, came back in 1970. Had two children. Did some temp work. There was book keeper then and three

other people besides Mother. They were worried about Mother and asked to help her out for a month in 1977. Increased by another month. Then offered full time position. Children were still young. Concerned about children who were still at home. Upto 1990 ILA had annual conventions. South Atlantic and Gulf Coast district. Elections had to be in this geographical area. Kids could come to office after school. Went to work by accident.

31:45

Thought was going to be housewife. Went to work in 77. Mom's title became Office Manager and Executive Secretary. Soon, took over as Office Manager, mother remained Exec Secy. Took over annual conventions. Knew a lot of stuff just from being around. Mother taught the rest. Buddy died in 1990. Pretty common for Secretary treasurer to become President. Like losing a brother. Been doing bookkeeping too.

36:35

Lots of changes in Union. Went from annual convention to biannual convention. Past convention, voted to have convention every 4 years. Mainly money saving tactic. Handle receipts and expenditure as part of bookkeeping. Mainly financial work. Be conscientious, care about work. Did not have to be told to do things, Did things as and when they presented themselves. Union has to care about employees, make things better for everyone. Maybe things are not quite the same now. Now there is more division. In the past, situation was progressive especially with regard to black and white staff members as opposed to other companies that had all white staff. Now, there majority of Union members are black. Younger ones feel they are not being allowed to advance as

fast as everyone else. They want more positions and opportunities. Experience in the hold and ship, physical work before they hold office. Most have done the work.

45:35

Labor Day was a big deal. Grandfather was with the teamsters. Grandmother would organize prizes. Big Barbeque organized at the park. Dances and singing were organized. Celebrated it with a big picnic every year. All Unions were together, not just ILA. Hayrides. Dock and Marine Council meetings, collection of different locals. Almost always used to be three times a year. Now, meets once a year. Social aspect dinner or reception. Convention used to be every year. Big deal for the ILA. Big Christmas party every year. Open house, food, visitors. Not as many social events. Mainly because of money. Not the same enthusiasm for Unions as before. Youngsters are taking 40 hr work week, 5 day work week for granted. Those were set because of Unions. Better wages also because of Union. In the past, companies had to give benefits to non Union workers so they could compete with Union workers. In the down period now, maybe will pick up, maybe not.

52:30

Grew up in Union household. Went to political rallies. Believed in what they were doing. People worked together, believed in each other. I'm a Democrat, but also watch the Opposition to see what they are saying. Never minded being called a Liberal. People don't pay attention anymore.

56:20

Went to Labor day picnic few years ago. Did not know anybody. Comfort is a bigger factor now than it used to be. Children don't stay out anymore, too hot. Two children. Daughter was involved in Union on campus, University of California, Santa Barbara. Married a physicist from Israel. Moved to New Mexico and then to Israel. Son in Minnesota. Lot of longshoreman's children become longshoreman. Good money but dangerous. Even those with college degrees don't make that sort of money. Hard work and dangerous.

1:02:20

Had no problems being part of the very few women. Mother used to not shy away. Used to give it back. Things in a way have regressed. Was more equal then, Now there is more separation. People don't want to hear from a woman. More and more women are part of the Union. Men resent it. Some lawsuits. Men say women should not be on the waterfront. More automation, jobs have changed. Then, women couldn't physically handle the heavy boxes but could be clerk and checker or nowadays operating machinery or cranes. Don't stand for discrimination of any kind.

1:09:20

Been a long time since there has been a strike. Don't really deal with master contract, deal mainly with financial stuff. Mother 's name was Moses. People called her everything but Moses. Mosely etc. No official nickname. Lot of respect and love.

1:14:00

There was a split. The IRILA has always been anti communist. Harry Bridges. More socialist than communist. Mom had to sign a document saying she was not communist. Our Union was proud they were anti communist. West Coast was little suspicious. Up north Unions have been sometimes about gangs and violence. Never any kickbacks in the district office. .

1:17:00

(AFTER STOPPING TAPE)

Always been Irish or Italian Local 1576 was the Banana Local. Mostly Mexican. Merged into Local 20. They handled the bananas. When they merged put locals together. Lost a lot of stuff in hurricane. 8 ft of water in the building.

1:21:45

Galveston so much smaller than it used to be. Some friction between Houston and Galveston. Never thought HQ would not be in Galveston. Though college educated most feel they can make better living on docks. Some used to work at docks in the summer and go back to regular job after summer. Health insurance was through Maritime Association. Paid through West Gulf, salaries, benefits. Did not go down much to the docks. Mainly in office. Wisconsin, they are out to get Unions. They don't want any Unions.